

# Biography

Biography of

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-WV

Representing West Virginia's Third Congressional District

Congressman Nick Rahall of Beckley represents the Third Congressional District of West Virginia. First elected in 1976, he is currently serving his 15th term and is the Dean of the West Virginia Delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rahall is well known for his expertise in national policies relating to transportation, infrastructure, technology, energy and the environment. In addition, he is a tireless fighter for the Appalachian Regional Commission, black lung benefits, veteran's benefits, and mine health and safety issues. In the House of Representatives, Rahall serves on the Committee on Resources where he is the Ranking Democratic Member and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure where he is the second senior Democrat.

In the area of transportation and infrastructure, Rahall is a national leader in the development of federal highway and transit legislation. Rahall has chaired or been the ranking democrat on the subcommittee tasked with writing the 6-year Highway bill. He currently serves on four panels of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee: Highways and Transit, Railroads, Aviation and Water Resources and Environment. A veteran of every federal highway bill since coming to Congress, Rahall was a key architect in the formulation of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (known as TEA 21). In that bill, he established the Rahall Transportation Institute (RTI), a consortium of five Southern West Virginia colleges, housed at Marshall University. Soon after, Rahall helped RTI win designation as a National Maritime Enhancement Institute to enable the school to compete for federal grants related to a great number of maritime activities. This is one of only seven so-named universities in the nation, further advancing RTI's mission of "Building Jobs through Transportation" for West Virginia.

Most recently, Rahall played a key role in developing the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) in 2005. Through that bill, West Virginia will receive on average \$404 million per year for highway improvements through 2009. RTI was awarded \$16 million in federal investment under the bill. In addition, Rahall helped secure more than \$183 million for important infrastructure projects in southern West Virginia, including the I 73/74 Corridor, the Coalfields Expressway, the New River Parkway, Route 10, the Shawnee Parkway, the Beckley Intermodal Gateway and the East Beckley Bypass.

Rahall assisted in garnering \$90 million for the Heartland Corridor, the Norfolk Southern route through southern West Virginia that will connect the Port of Virginia to the Heartland of America. The crown jewel of the project will be an intermodal facility at Prichard, which will increase commercial and shipping interests in the region and serve as a magnet for business interests to the area. RTI played a major role in getting the Heartland Corridor project off the ground, conducting the study that will enable Norfolk Southern to begin double-stacking its trains, increasing production and

efficiency.

Deeply involved in the development of numerous water resources and development acts, Rahall is responsible for many U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control and related projects in southern West Virginia including the establishment of the Southern West Virginia Environmental Infrastructure Program, for which the Congressman has secured more than \$21 million in federal investment. The purpose of the program is to assist communities in need of water and wastewater treatment services.

In the area of aviation policy, Rahall devised programs to assist airports in small communities and rural areas, as well as to promote intermodal transportation developments at these airports, in the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (known as AIR 21). Rahall continues to support Third District airports through Small Community Air Service Development grants and the Essential Air Service grants, among other programs.

Recognized for his dedicated efforts in promoting the diversification of the economic base of southern West Virginia, Rahall's commitment to the Southern Highlands Initiative is helping to support the development of new industrial and business parks to be located within each of the southern coalfield counties. His dedication to promoting high technology development is also clear through the establishment of the Rahall, II High Technology Corridors Program. Working with local community and economic development leaders, the Congressman is encouraging a sustainable approach to economic development, one that focuses on the advance of small businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises along major transportation corridors such as Interstate 64 and 77. To assist with fostering new business development, Congressman Rahall has over the past several years secured millions of dollars for the construction of new Technology Centers at Concord University, at the Greenbrier Valley Airport in Lewisburg, the Raleigh County Airport near Beckley, and in Hinton.

In addition, Rahall was instrumental in helping to establish the Center for Environmental, Geotechnical, and Applied Sciences at Marshall University in 1993. The goal of the center is to forge close relationships among the business community, higher education institutions, and government agencies, in technology-based endeavors such as GIS tax mapping for local governmental entities and the development of an environmental management incubator to provide environmental assistance to both small businesses and local governmental entities.

Rahall is also a Congressional leader on mining-related issues. In 1985, he assumed the chairmanship of the House Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, a position he held until 1993 when he became chairman of the House Surface Transportation Subcommittee, and transformed what had been a moribund panel into one engaged in the aggressive oversight and reform of many of the Nation's antiquated federal mining laws to bring them more in line with the public interest. During this period, Rahall gained the enactment of legislation overhauling the federal onshore oil and gas and geothermal stream leasing systems and started the effort to reform the Mining Law of 1872.

He also took on the cause of greater protections for coalfield citizens by twice spearheading legislation to extend the Abandoned Mine Reclamation program, which provides funds to combat health, safety and environmental threats from old mine sites. In the course of this effort, provisions were included to allow these funds to be used for public water supply systems in the coalfields as well as to help finance health care for retired coal miners. Rahall additionally gained enactment of provisions to provide coalfield citizens with protections from subsidence caused by underground coal mining.

In other areas related to mining and minerals, Rahall is the sponsor of legislation to promote the re-mining of lands previously mined for coal, the Coalbed Methane Development Program, the reauthorization of the Mining and Mineral Resources Research Institute program, the Rahall/Byrd amendment to the Export-Import Bank Reauthorization prohibiting the financing of foreign mining ventures and the National Geologic Mapping Act of 1992.

Rahall's work on the Resources Committee, however, has not all been related to mining. He is the author of the 1978 legislation, which established the New River Gorge National River as a unit of the National Park System in southern West Virginia. Ten years later he gained enactment of legislation to designate the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River, in the process creating the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States. Rahall legislation also established the National Coal Heritage Area in 11 southern West Virginia counties.

Numerous State and national organizations have recognized Congressman Rahall for his work. For his work on environmental issues, he is the recipient of the 1997 Citizen's Coal Council award, the 1996 "Keeper of the Flame Award" presented in 1996 by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and the 1990 "Friend of the Earth Award" for his work on protecting the coalfield environment, the Sierra Club's 1988 "Seneca Award" for Outstanding Environmental Stewardship, American River's 1988 "River Conservation Award," the Ansel Adams Award from the Wilderness Society in 2004, and the Mountaineer Conservation Leadership Award from the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition on Earth Day 2005.

In the area of transportation, Rahall has received the American Road & Transportation Builders Association's 1997 Public Service Award and the 1996 Highway Safety Leader Award. Diverse organizations such as the National Association of Home Care, the West Virginia Home Health Council, the West Virginia Credit Union and the American Federation of Government Employees of West Virginia have also recognized Rahall's public service.

A 33rd degree Mason, Rahall is a life member of the National Rifle Association, Elks, Moose, and the NAACP, and was made an honorary member of the United Mine Workers of America in 2003. Before his election to the Congress, Rahall served as a staff assistant to U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, and as a businessman. Congressman Rahall has three children: Rebecca, Nick Joe, III and Suzanne Nicole. Congressman Rahall is married to the former Melinda Ross of Ashland, Kentucky.